



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
DARRELL V. MCGRAW, JR.
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986

Press Release

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Contact: Amy Saunders

Phone: (304) 558-2021

Attorney General McGraw Calls for Federal and Statewide Reforms to Increase School and College Campus Safety

Charleston --- Attorney General Darrell McGraw today issued a call to federal and state leaders to address serious deficiencies in federal and state laws and educational policies that leave students vulnerable to violence in their schools and on college campuses.

As a member of the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) Task Force on School and Campus Safety, Attorney General Darrell McGraw released a 14-page report that includes specific recommendations that address threat assessment, protocols for dealing with the mentally ill, information sharing among law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders, and crisis response planning and communications.

“The goal of this report is to stimulate dialogue among policy makers, educational administrators, law enforcement professionals and others as they examine school and campus safety issues,” Attorney General McGraw said. “With assistance from nationally recognized experts in the field of school and campus security, we have compiled a brief report that brings to focus a number of key issues that have surfaced as a result of the recent tragedy on the campus of Virginia Tech and eruptions of violence in schools across the country.”

Recommendations from the Task Force include:

- All schools and colleges should establish a system whereby disturbing behavior is reported to an individual or multidisciplinary team of individuals with expertise and training in risk assessment that can assess the information received and put into action an appropriate response. Students, parents, faculty and other community stakeholders should be made aware of the reporting mechanism.
- State and federal lawmakers should examine privacy laws in an effort to remove barriers to effective information sharing. Appropriate state and federal agencies should clarify how information, including mental health records, can be shared under existing state and federal laws.
- States should consider modifying or enhancing state laws to ensure that all information that is relevant to federal firearms laws is shared with the National Instant Criminal Background System, especially for individuals disqualified from purchasing or possessing firearms for mental health reasons. The U.S. Department of Justice should provide clear guidance to jurisdictions on the scope of relevant records.
- State legislators should mandate that all schools and colleges that receive state funding create, maintain, and update emergency management plans.
- Colleges should implement a multi-point, redundant communication system that leverages existing technology and provides information to as many people as possible as quickly as possible.
- Every school and college should have mechanisms in place to allow for the anonymous reporting of perceived threats by

students or faculty. The system should include educational outreach and effective follow-up by trained professionals.

- States should continue to implement and expand bullying prevention measures, including cyber bullying.

“This report is not designed to comprehensively address all of the issues related to school and campus security but to identify some of the legislative and policy weaknesses that impact the safety of our educational institutions,” Attorney General McGraw said.

For a copy of the report, visit www.wvago.gov.

The 27-member Task Force*, chaired by Colorado Attorney General John Suthers and Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick Lynch, was convened to update a 1999 report issued by NAAG to address issues surrounding school violence. Although much of the information in the 1999 report remains relevant, the ad hoc group was created to update recommendations and determine what issues have been brought into sharper focus as a result of the tragedy at Virginia Tech.

“I am deeply concerned about the ability of students to learn in an environment that is as secure as possible from the threat of violence,” Attorney General McGraw said. “Attorneys General are committed to doing whatever is necessary to make our nation’s schools and campuses as safe as possible.”

*The members of the Task Force are: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Guam, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

A copy of the report can be downloaded, by clicking [here](#).

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